

**Assistive Technology Advisory Council Meeting  
November 17, 2022  
Draft Minutes**

**Members Present:**

Joann Willis Lindholm, Chair; Kelvin Harris, Vice Chair; Christy Crowther; Samantha Gregory; Eric Raff; Kevin Kozoil; Elizabeth Flaherty; Sara Pruett; Scott Pruett

**Members Present by Conference Call:** None

**Guests:**

Robin Ramsey, Director, F.R.E.E.  
Tracy Meador, Operations Manager, F.R.E.E.  
John Naples, Manager, CATS  
Sara Link, Director, Virginia No Wrong Door  
Alison Clarke, Community Engagement Manager, Sheltering Arms Institute  
Brittany Howard, TAP Specialist Coordinator, VDDHH  
Dale Batten; Deputy Commissioner, DARS  
Alee Halsey, Occupational Therapy Student

**Staff Present:**

Barclay Shepard, Manager, VATS  
Elin Glass, VATS  
Sonja Schaible, VATS  
Emily McKeough, VATS  
Paula Martin, VATS

**Interpreters** Ivy Brothers and Carrie Humphery

**Call to Order:**

Joann Lindholm, Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.  
Ms. Lindholm stated that this meeting was focused on “Connections and Collaborations”.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The May 19, 2022, minutes were approved as written.

**Public Comment:**

There were no comments from the public.

**Old Business:**

No report

**New Business:**

**VATS Program Updates:**

Mr. Shepard provided the following general program updates to include:

- Summary of the ATAC meeting's May 19, 2022, Director's Report.
- Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR) that extends current discretionary funding levels for federal programs through December 16.
- Reauthorization of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century AT Act anticipated in FY2023. Reauthorization would replace the current Assistive Technology Act of 2004.
- Reviewed formal (contractual) and informal collaborative partnerships with state agencies, non-profits and No Wrong Door partners to increase access to and acquisition of AT devices and services.
- VATS growing focus and involvement in emergency preparedness efforts.
- VATS website changed to [www.vats.virginia.gov](http://www.vats.virginia.gov); however, the previous [www.vats.org](http://www.vats.org) website will direct users to the new website.

Sonja Schaible, AT Acquisition & Aging Coordinator, provided an overview of activities to include:

- Provided/updated staff training on AT equipment kits available at Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).
- Update on the progress of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among F.R.E.E., VATS, and VDEM. The MOA was signed and will help to address mobility related durable medical equipment needs for Virginians at state shelters during natural disasters.
- Update on adult and children's contracted DME reuse services to include contract extensions and timeline for new contracts.

Emily McKeough, AT Access Coordinator, provided an overview of activities to include:

- Pilot program with the Department of Corrections to meet AT needs of offenders with disabilities accessing training and education programs while incarcerated.
- Collaborated with DARS VR program to provide seven "Time Management" and "Sensory Processing" groups to address executive function needs of students with disabilities.

Paula Martin, NWD Public Health Workforce AT Specialist, provided an overview of activities to include:

- Reported on VATS collaborative activities with Sheltering Arms Institute.
- Reported on Information and Assistance activities.
- Discussed successful partnerships with AAAs to demonstrate therapeutic robotic pets to encourage social inclusion and reduce anxiety.

### **No Wrong Door Virginia Presentation:**

Sara Link, No Wrong Door Director, provided an introduction to Virginia's No Wrong Door (NWD) Initiative, as well as its partnership with VATS to enhance the capacity of NWD to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) devices/services. Ms. Link reported on challenges to and opportunities within the NWD system to connect people to resources and how resources help people manage their lives. Discussion included several kits developed by VATS and NWD to address social isolation and personal safety of older adults and Virginians with disabilities. NWD contains a suite of resource websites and 211 Virginia, a statewide resource database with 24-hour phone access and a live chat function.

### **Sheltering Arms Institute Presentation:**

Allison Clark, Community Engagement Manager, provided an update on the 114-bed inpatient rehabilitation hospital in Richmond, Va. Discussion focused on AT services to include a description of the “My Life Room” available for inpatients and outpatients. Equipment in the My Life Room was provided by VATS through its partnership with Virginia No Wrong Door. Prior to discharge, patients are referred to the My Life Room to receive education/demonstration of simple AT devices to help persons function more independently and reduce social isolation.

### **Working Lunch: No Wrong Door Falls Prevention Kit Demos**

VATS staff provided demonstrations of equipment available in the newly developed Falls Prevention Kits, in partnership with Virginia No Wrong Door. Equipment was available for council members to demo and/or ask questions.

### **VATS Contractor Updates:**

Robin Ramsey from the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment & Endowment (F.R.E.E.) provided a program update to include updates from full-service reuse sites. Highlights included:

- Update on data/clients served in 2022.
- F.R.E.E. survey outcomes data.
- Involvement in emergency preparedness initiatives with the Virginia Department for Emergency Management, VATS, the American Red Cross.
- Clinical work experiences for students.
- Community trainings provided.
- F.R.E.E. now included six full-service sites and twelve equipment reuse closets. Currently developing one new full-service reuse program in Harrisonburg, Va. Partnership with CATS at Emory and Henry.

John Naples from Children’s Assistive Technology Service (CATS) provided an update on CATS to include the following:

- Reviewed 2022 data. C.A.T.S. had another productive year, including completing 1154 requests for 1,399 pieces of equipment worth a reuse value of \$2.1 million.
- C.A.T.S. website update was finalized which helps us capture improved data on clients, services, and internal controls.
- Families’ follow-up surveys continue to show positive support for our mission with 96% of respondents satisfied or very satisfied with our services. 90% of families responded that the provided equipment made caring for their child easier.
- Finances have remained stable as C.A.T.S. funding sources were as follows: Approximately 40% individual donations, 40% grant funding and 20% business or community support.
- Continues to transition from a volunteer focused organization to a paid staff nonprofit. The latest essential staff position hire of 2022 was a clinical director to evaluate every incoming request for appropriateness and confirming therapy support for the child. We feel this is very important and continued protection against liability issues for C.A.T.S.
- Hoping to hire a professional development director in mid-2023 to help support our aggressive budget and strategic plan.

**Election of Officers:**

Joann Lindholm discussed the need to elect a new slate of officers at the next full ATAC meeting. Volunteers were encouraged to contact Ms. Lindholm if they are interested. VATS staff and or Ms. Lindholm may contact individuals prior to the next meeting to verify their interest in serving as an officer on ATAC. Officers include: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. A Nominating Committee is not required. An election of a slate of officers can be completed at an AT Advisory Council meeting where a quorum is present. At the next meeting, Ms. Lindholm will request a vote on new officers. There will be an opportunity for additional nominations from the floor during the meeting.

**ATAC Member Updates:**

Several ATAC members reported updates from their organizations or constituent groups.

**Next ATAC Meeting:**

The next ATAC Meeting:

- May 18, 2023 (Location TDB)

\*Meetings will be held at the DARS Central Office, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive, Richmond, VA. 23229

**Adjournment:**

*A motion was made to adjourn and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:00pm*